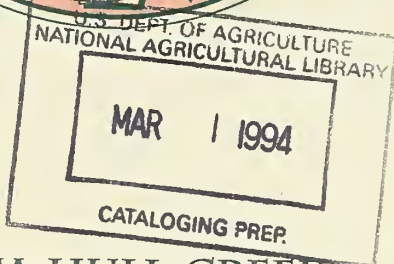


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FROM HULL CREEK TO THE CLAVEY RIVER

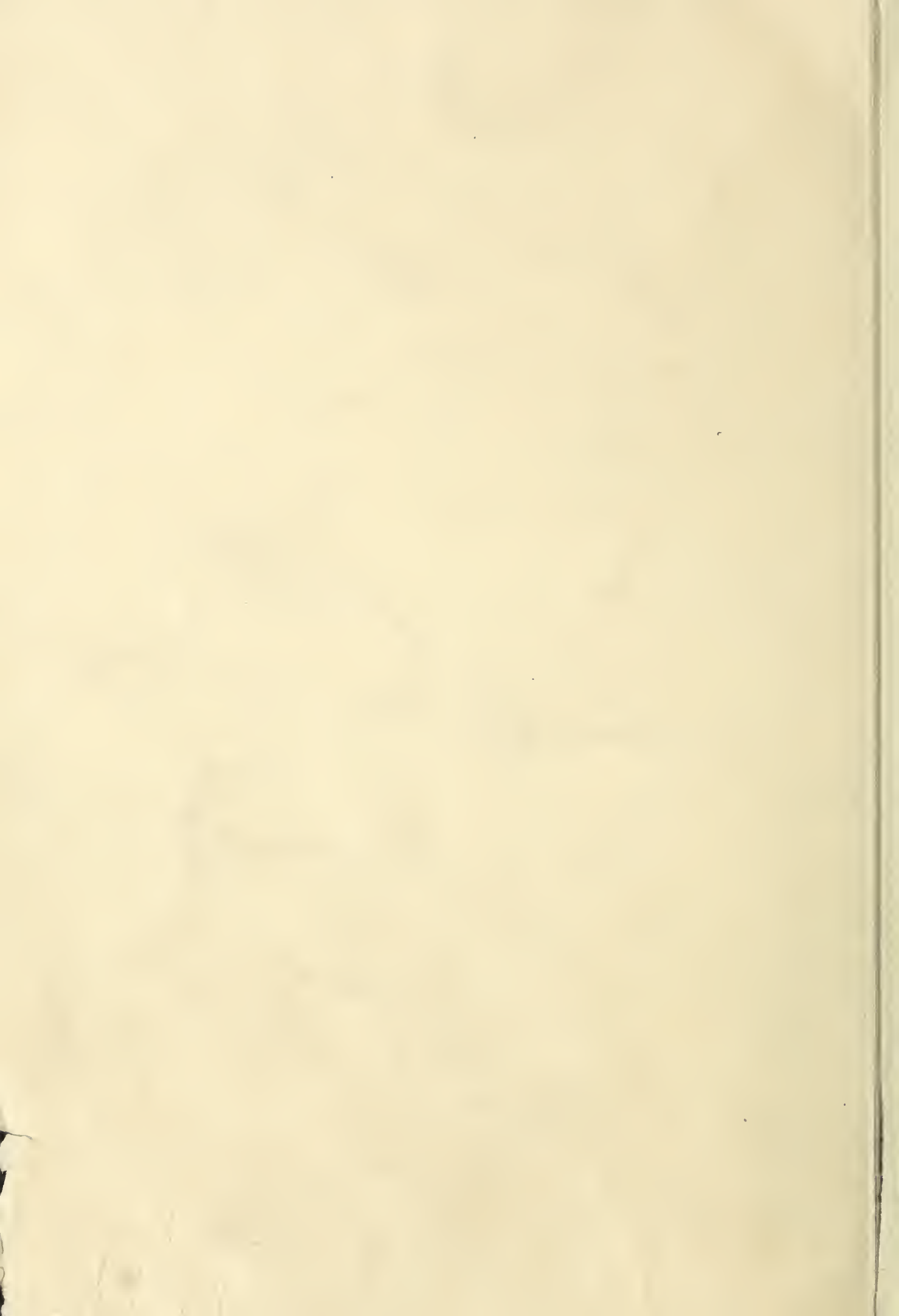
Guide to a Portion
of the Historic
West Side Railroad



United States
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FROM HULL CREEK TO THE CLAVEY RIVER

Guide to a Portion of the Historic West Side Railroad



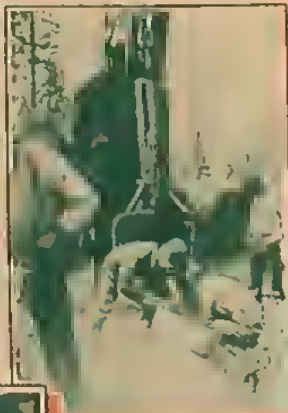
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5 The meadow to your right is called Boney Flat. The pines here were planted in 1978 and '79 by the U.S. Forest Service. On the hillside in the distance, you can see the even line of this former West Side railroad grade. The steepness of the West Side's grades was optimally kept below 4.8%, that is 4.8' of gain or loss in elevation for every 100' in length.

6 This is the site of Camp 25, active in 1915. This logging camp was at Milepost 33, indicating that it was 33 miles distant from the sawmill in Tuolumne. An old grading camp is also near here. These camps were located at intervals along the railroad for use by workers who built the grades. They were home to laborers, powder monkeys, mule skinner and steam shovel operators - as well as to support workers like cooks and blacksmiths. The railroad between the sawmill and the Clavey River was built by hand, explosives, animal and steam power. After the grade crossed the Clavey,



Powder Monkeys and Steam Shovel

gas-powered machinery was generally used in favor of steam shovels.

Subtle remains of steam donkey work areas can be seen in these woods. Steam donkeys were huge, steam-powered machines used to pull or yard felled logs from the stump to a track-side landing where logs could be loaded -



Steam Donkey

again with the aid of a steam donkey - onto waiting flat cars. Steam donkeys came in different sizes: the larger and more powerful ones could handle over a mile of 1 1/8"

WEST SIDE RAILS FROM HULL CREEK TO THE CLAVEY RIVER

This tour provides a glimpse into the Stanislaus National Forest's rich railroad logging history. The Stanislaus was home to four railroad logging companies in the first half of the 20th century: the Standard Lumber Company, the Yosemite Sugar Pine Lumber Company, the California Peach and Fig Growers and the West Side Lumber Company.



West Side Lumber Company Mill

The spotlight of this tour is on the West Side. Its railroad logging system included over 70 miles of mainline - stretching from the town of Tuolumne to within 6 miles of Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park - and over 250 cumulative miles of temporary spur grades. Coupled with the fact that the West Side operated as a railroad logging system from 1900 through 1960, it is easy to see that this company and its steam railroad had a formidable impact on the Central Sierra's economy and character.

The idea of tapping timber by rail in the Stanislaus National Forest was not realistic until 1897 when the Sierra Railway came to nearby Jamestown. Lumber production on this scale needed a state, national and global market, so the Sierra Railway and its link with the Southern Pacific Railroad in Oakland opened the door to mining the region's "green gold." The West Side Lumber Company's sawmill was built in the town of Tuolumne, less than 15 miles east of Jamestown. The West Side's railroad, incorporated as the Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite Valleys Railway, was so named due to the owner's initial dream to combine the railroad logging operation with a tourist trade to Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite. The railway started at an elevation of 2,690', maintained a mean contour of 5,000' and had its highest camp, Camp 35, at 6,300'.

Out of sync even with trends at the turn into the 20th century, the West Side's owners chose to build a narrow, 3'

gauge railway rather than the standard, 4' 8 1/2" gauge. Measured as the distance between the inner sides of the two rails, standard gauge had many advantages over narrow, including increased stability and greater interchangeability and availability of parts and equipment. However, narrow gauge did have the advantage of being somewhat less expensive to construct the grade and the ability to negotiate tighter curves.

Climb aboard an imaginary West Side steam locomotive pulling a long line of empty flat cars to be loaded deep in the woods. You will journey to a time when there were no roads - only trails and rails.

Use caution when stopping or slowing. Presently, this tour route is NOT DRIVABLE FOR ITS ENTIRE LENGTH. The road surface is appropriate for mountain bikes for part of the way but will require walking your bike through some areas for safety and to lessen erosion damage. Off-road vehicles are not allowed on some portions of the road. The map indicates the road surface conditions and vehicle restrictions. PLEASE CONSULT THE MAP TO PLAN YOUR MEANS OF TRAVEL FOR THE TOUR.

Do not remove artifacts; leave them so that others may touch the past. Excavating, removing or otherwise damaging a heritage resource is a crime. Anyone caught may be substantially fined and imprisoned. Help protect these fragile and irreplaceable reminders of the past for present and future generations. If you discover anyone digging, metal detecting, removing or damaging any heritage resource, immediately contact the MiWok District Ranger at (209) 586-3234.

1 This travelway is part of the West Side Lumber Company's mainline for its railroad logging operations. Toward the inside of the road, you can see a siding used by the West Side in connection with its activities at Camp 24.

Sidings, or areas of multiple tracks, were made so that the railroad cars or engines could be stored, loaded or serviced off the mainline, allowing other trains to pass. The West Side ran several trains each day between the mountains and the mill, so well-placed sidings were very important to the company's safety and efficiency.

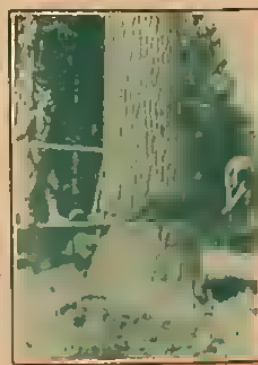
About 100' left of this Tourpost was an oil tank. You can still see the tank-house frame and filler pipe.

2 You are on the site of West Side's Camp 24. Used as a logging camp from 1915 through 1960, it once was home for about 200 loggers, trainmen, cooks, flunkies, whistle punks, high-climbers, gandy dancers, donkey doctors and other colorfully-named woods workers.

were the small rivulets which may be dry all summer, but which carry a torrent of runoff in the winter and spring. These small drainages could and did destroy the grade, rendering the railroad system useless beyond the point of the damage.

Park safely near this Tourpost and carefully hike downhill. A short distance downslope, at the point of the drainage's crossing of the grade, look for the culvert structure built by the West Side. This is typical of the moderately-sized culverts built by digging a trench beneath the grade and lining it with logs and rock. At the outlet, large, shaped, granite rock was carefully placed around and under the log culvert. The rocks forming the outlet were carefully fit so that mortar was not necessary. From this point, as you travel eastward, about 3/10, 1/2 and 1 1/2 miles from here, are other culvert structures - the last is especially impressive.

9 This is the site of another WSLC grading camp, occupied by workers who built the roadbed and laid the track. The camp was probably occupied in the late 1914 and 1915 season. At this point, we know very little about it and hope to discover more in the future through old-timers, archival research and historic archaeology.



Men on springboards using a masonry whip

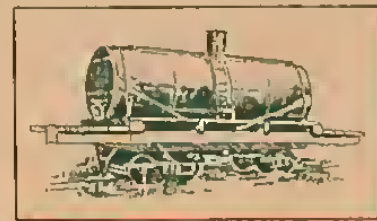
On the slope above the grade, the deep furrows tell you that steam donkeys yarded logs from the woods and piled or decked them by the grade for loading onto cars.

As you explore the woods for these traces of turn-of-the-century logging, you may find a tall, straight, limbed tree. Called a *spar pole*, these strategically placed trees had rigging placed near the top which allowed logs to be lifted either for yarding or loading purposes. You may also see unusually high stumps with springboard notches in them. Many of the trees in this vicinity were cut before the chainsaw era and were, instead, cut by ax and masonry whip. Sometimes when felling a tree on a steep slope, the logger on the downslope side of the tree had to get level with his upslope partner. To do this, a notch was axed at the appropriate place on the tree base and the springboard -

Flunkies did odd jobs around the camps, especially serving and cleanup chores in the messhall; whistle punks passed signals from the choker-setters to the donkey engineers by means of tugging a whistle on the steam donkey; high-climbers limbed and climbed trees to sling rigging; gandy dancers tamped the ground in preparation of laying track; donkey doctors repaired steam donkey engines and similar machinery.

Oblique aerial view of Camp 24 balloon track

3 The oil tank peched in the through cut was accessed by a short spur that ran just upslope of the tank. In this way a tank car could be pushed onto the spur and this large tank filled by gravity from the car. Notice the extraordinarily thick walls of the tank car and the numerous crown rivets. The car's wheel assembly is called a *nick*. Look at its axle and you will see that the manufacturer was TAYLOR. The 1900 refers to either the manufacturer or patent date.



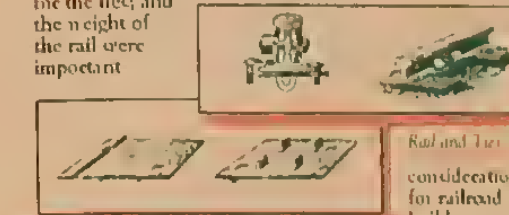
Oil Tank Car

Through cuts are a very common engineering feature on historic railroad grades. To maintain the gradual slope of the grade and avoid excessive curves, the West Side simply cut through hills and mountain slopes. Today's road designers, having large earth-moving equipment at their

disposal, generally don't dig such places, where practical - that is, they remove the outside slope of the hill or cut an extra wide - to improve the road's safety and reduce its maintenance requirements.

To preserve the feel of being on a historic railroad grade, the Stanislaus National Forest has preserved many through cuts and other distinguishing grade features. You will pass through many of these cuts along the tour. Because of their narrowness, please slow down and use extra caution... remember, you're at the throttle of a multi-ton steam locomotive pulling a full load of empties into the woods!

4 You will see an occasional tie plate, spike, tie rail or other piece of railroad hardware along the grade. Selection of the style of tie plate and spike, the length, spacing and species of wood used for the ties, and the weight of the rail were important



Tie Plates

The West Side commonly used 6'-long, cedar ties that were spaced 2' apart, from center to center. Longer lasting than any of the pines, cedar had a lifespan of about 9 years. 2,640 ties were required for each mile, along with 352 rail joints and 10,560 spikes! The volume of wood used for ties, tiesles, fuel and other necessities of the railroad was enormous. An estimated one-quarter of the nation's entire timber cut in 1900 was consumed by the railroads.

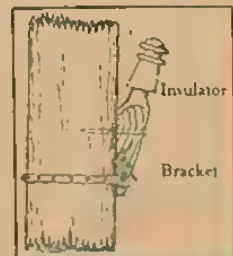
Rail weight is expressed in pounds per 3'-long section, and 60-pound rail was typical on the West Side's mainline. Spur grades often used 35-pounders, with rail strength proportional to weight.

12 This is the site of Buffalo Landing. Buffalo was a bustling place! By 1958, truck logging dominated and became far more economical than logging by rail. The West Side shrank its mainline system and abandoned most of its spurs. The last operating railroad on the West Side, Buffalo Landing was the scene of ferrethly transferring logs from trucks onto flat cars.

The travelway overles the Trout Creek spur. To continue exploring the mainline, park safely and follow the grade which runs downslope of the spur.

Take the time to walk the old mainline. Imagine the sights, sounds and smells of the West Side railroad logging days. Imagine the workers - their tough, dangerous jobs, and what they would have done with their free time in the woods. Imagine what life in a railroad logging camp was like for the families - their work and play.

The mainline crossed the Clavey River by means of a 312'-long, 76'-high, wooden trestle. The Clavey River Trestle burned down, but some of its support structure is plainly visible. The bridge tender's camp and another water tank once stood near this trestle, west of the river. The newly complete remains of a West Side flat car are also here. Imagine what it was like to walk across the bridge, checking for embers from hot machinery after a hilly loaded train chugged by. Though it was an era that ended only a generation ago, it is a way of life that now seems far removed from today's world.



Insulator and bracket installation for telephone system

10 You may have already noticed traces of the West Side's telephone line. It was uninsulated, galvanized wire that was strung in the trees along the downslope side of the railroad grade. You can occasionally see wire which has fallen to the ground as well as wooden, threaded, insulator pegs or brackets nailed into the tree, about 15' up. You may also see a glass or porcelain insulator or fragment of one.

The telephone was vital to the West Side's operations, providing a quick communication link between the woods and the mill town of Tuolumne.

11 Here, paralleling the mainline grade, is the beginning of the Trout Creek Spur. This grade led past Camp 26, later called Camp Clavey.

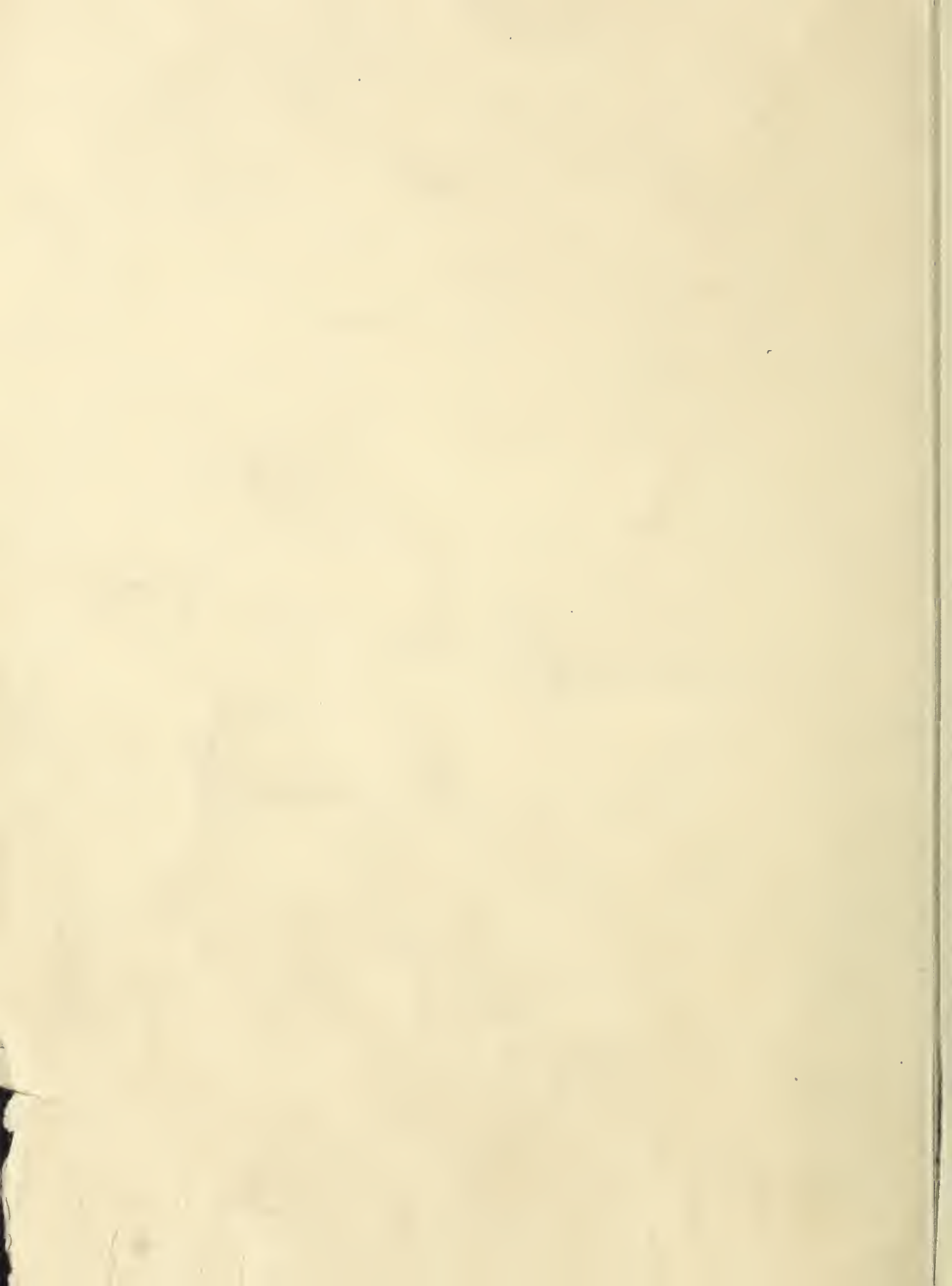
Camp 26 was used as a logging camp in 1916 and again from the late 1950s as a reload station, where logs brought from the woods by truck were reloaded onto the railroad cars for transport to the sawmill. The Trout Creek spur continued well north of Camp 26 and reached into old-growth stands of timber along Trout Creek, a tributary of the Clavey.

Park safely and walk about 40' below the grade. Here you will discover the Great Wall. It is a retaining wall used to catch the soil in this steep, unstable area to prevent it from sliding out and weakening the grade. Imagine how this was built: block and tackle, probably a tall tripod or boom, hammers and chisels, along with plenty of cursing and muscle.



Clavey River Trestle

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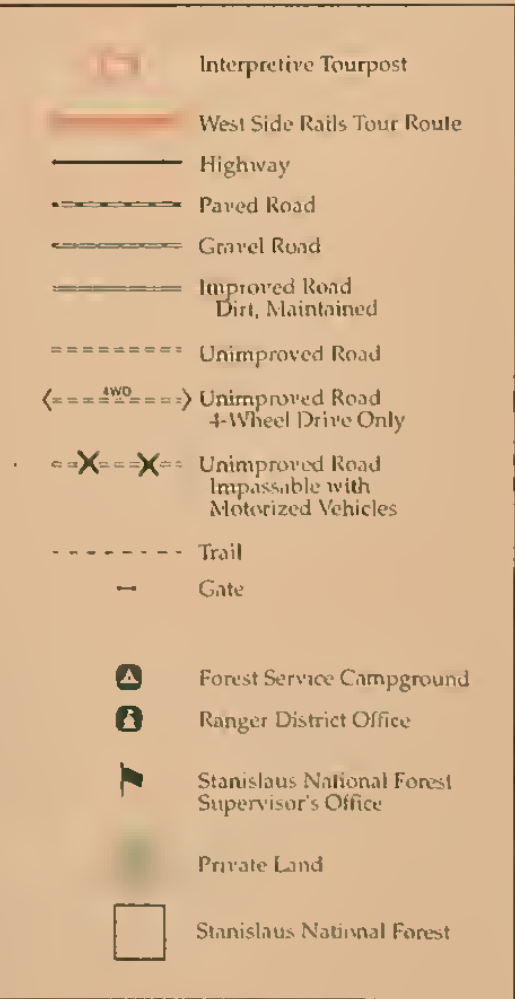
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WEST SIDE RAILS



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TIME TRAVEL ON THE WEST SIDE RAILS

- 1897 Sierra Railway reaches Jamestown, providing a link with the Southern Pacific rail network.
Rich timber lands in the Tuolumne River watershed already purchased by William and Henry Crocker - William was the son of Charles Crocker of Big Four fame, controllers of the Central and Southern Pacific railroads. William was vice president of the Sierra Railway Company.
Stanislaus Forest Reserve established by President Grover Cleveland.
- 1899 West Side Flume and Lumber Company (WSF&LC) incorporated and the sawmill site purchased in the townsite of what is now, Tuolumne.
- 1900 WSF&LC formed and incorporated the Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite Valleys Railway to bring logs by rail to the mill. By year's end, rails extend over 13 miles into the woods.
- 1903 Economic Panic grips the nation.
New owners buy the company and simplify its name to the West Side Lumber Company (WSLC). Much more timber land is purchased by the WSLC.
- 1905 Willamette steam donkeys replace smaller, less powerful models and add to the gradual transition away from chute logging.
By the end of 1906, the mainline is about 30 miles long.

- 1914 Depressed market for wood products ends with World War I.
- 1915 Logging operations for the West Side conducted out of Camps 24 and 25.
- 1917 Demand for wood products soars with the US' entry into WWI.
Clavey River Trestle constructed.
- 1920 WSLC sawmill ends the year by milling a record 60 million board feet of lumber. The company owned 10 steam donkeys and employed 300 workers.
- 1921 Pickering Lumber Company, a large timber owner and lumber producer in the Southern states, buys the Standard Lumber Company. The SLC is another large railroad logging operation whose mill was located just a few miles from the West Side's.
- 1925 WSLC expands locomotive roster to 3 Heislors and 5 Shays.
Construction crews reach Milepost 46.
WSLC purchased by the Pickering Lumber Company (PLC).
Forest Service prods the PLC to use tractors where possible instead of the more destructive steam donkeys in its West Side operations on government timber land. PLC officials resist.

- 1929 Stock Market crashes. PLC can only keep its West Side operations going through December, 1930.
Mainline extended nearly to Jawbone Creek.
- 1931 PLC files bankruptcy. 1934, former WSLC owners reacquire Pickering's West Side operations. The Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite Valleys Railway name is dropped.
- 1939 Tractors for yarding logs in general use on the West Side.
By year's end, less than 32 million board feet of lumber milled by the WSLC. The company begins a pattern of exchanging large tracts of cutover lands to the Forest Service (FS) for the right to cut timber on FS-administered land.
WWII creates an increased demand for lumber and a shortage of equipment and labor.
- 1943 Chainsaws introduced to West Side operations.
- 1945 WWII ends.
Trucks to haul logs from the woods to reload stations along the railroad become common and are favored over building railroad spur grades.

- 1950 Camp 45, at Milepost 56, in use.
Wrights Creek Fire causes serious damage to the mainline.
- 1954 Labor strike halts logging.
- 1958 Woods operations shrink to the Clavey reload.
PLC reacquires the WSLC.
- 1962 Bitter labor dispute racks the company.
Mill shuts down. Repeated fires, explosions and vandalism add to the company's troubles.
- 1965 PLC sells its Tuolumne County holdings to Fibreboard Paper Products. Sawmill dismantled.
Camp Clavey shut down for final time.
- 1967 Railroad hardware removed by salvage companies.

PHOTOGRAPHS REPRODUCED IN THIS BROCHURE were provided through the courtesy of the Tuolumne County Historical Society, the Dolly Mills June Madrid Collection, Fibreboard Wood Products Company and the U.S. Forest Service.

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